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THE BEDLAM FILES

With Adam Groves

“By far, the greatest danger of Artificial Intelligence is that people conclude too early that they understand it.”

— Eliezer Yudkowsky

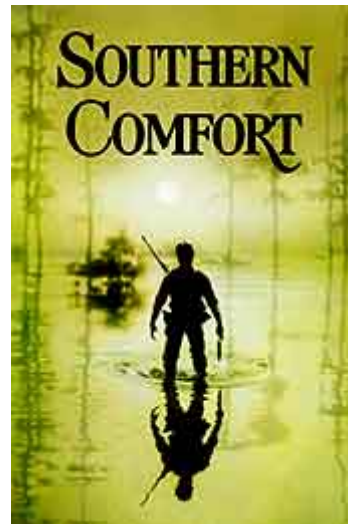
Streaming Now



1. **SIN CITY**

Obviously this nearly two decades old film is no longer as groundbreaking as it seemed back in 2005, when its CGI enhanced comic book universe was an unprecedented sight. Still, the film’s defiantly non-PC attitude (its characters don’t watch their language) renders it a subversive outlier in today’s moviescape. Adapted from a series of graphic novels by Frank Miller, **SIN CITY** features more acts of violence than I’ve seen in just about any other movie, yet plays more like an art film than a traditional actioner, with

Adam's Picks



1. **SOUTHERN COMFORT**

Walter Hill’s **SOUTHERN COMFORT** (1981) tends to be classified as one of the innumerable **DELIVERANCE** wannabes that cluttered movie screens in the 1970s and 80s. It’s actually a none-too-disguised ‘Nam metaphor, with clueless American soldiers blundering into a forbidding jungle universe (the Louisiana bayou, standing in for Vietnam) and upsetting its inhabitants. None of the characters are especially memorable or unique (despite an imposing cast that includes Powers Boothe, Keith Carradine and **Fred Ward**), existing

insanely stylized black and white imagery and a cast who clearly understood and appreciated the crafty tone. PARAMOUNT PLUS



2. THE VOD

At a little over five minutes this is one of the longest, and best, of the many videos generated by the [A.I. Art Appreciation YouTube channel](#). The proprietor is an individual calling himself Skyward, who has “fallen hopelessly in love with A.I.” and used it to create a succession of wildly phantasmagoric montages. THE VOD stands out due to the fact that it makes an attempt at narrative progression, and takes as its subject a more-or-less ordinary man and his life in Midwest America during the 1960s and 70s. The imagery, all of it computer generated, is impressive in its naturalistic detail but still a little off, with newspaper text and slogans that run the gamut from charmingly scatterbrained (“We A Hate Men”) to complete gibberish, and human facial features that tend to subtly (and creepily) morph. A video that’s oddly touching and provocative, and not a little bizarre. YOUTUBE

solely to be picked off--but then again, Walter Hill’s films have never been renowned for their complexity, and as an example of unpretentious action-suspense SOUTHERN COMFORT represents Hill at his absolute best.

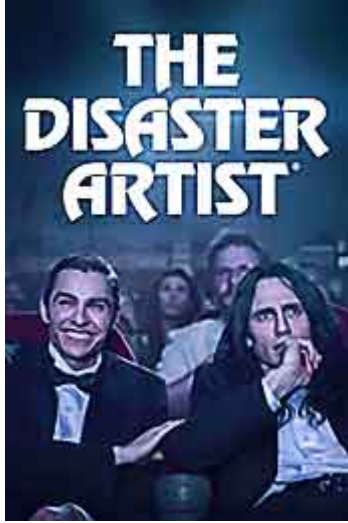
FILM



2. CINEMA SPECULATION

A book of film commentary by [Quentin Tarantino](#). As you’d expect, his write-ups of 1960s and 70s films like BULLITT, DELIVERANCE, STRAW DOGS and [ROLLING THUNDER](#) are enormously passionate and opinionated, weaving in snatches of history (Tarantino’s own and that of the filmmakers) and, as the title portends, speculation. The book is enormously fun to read, with an impressive breadth of knowledge and a highly quirky layout. It is, in short, very much like Tarantino’s films: amusing, outrageous and filled with quotable lines.

BOOK



3. THE DISASTER ARTIST

This 2017 film was warmly received, but its reputation has declined precipitously, due mostly to the behavior of its director/star James Franco. I won't deny that Franco tends to come off as (in the words of my British friends) a bit of a berk, or that his filmmaking talents weren't fully up to the challenge of adapting Greg Sestero's 2013 book about the making of Tommy Wiseau's THE ROOM (the "best bad movie ever made"). Nonetheless, the film memorably dramatizes the rocky yet affectionate dynamic between Wiseau (played by Franco) and the aspiring actor Sestero (Franco's brother Dave), from which THE ROOM was birthed. Furthermore, Franco does an uncanny imitation of Wiseau, a character so strange I doubt too many viewers would accept him in a purely fictional context. NETFLIX



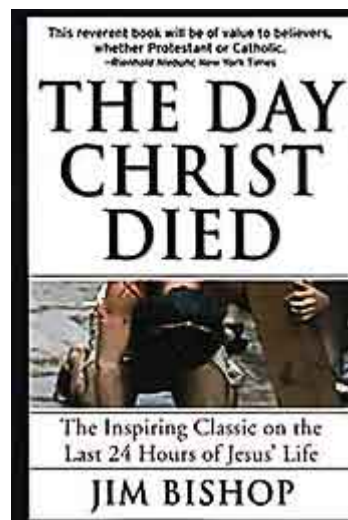
4. FREDDIE GOT FINGERED



3. THE MIGHTY PEKING MAN

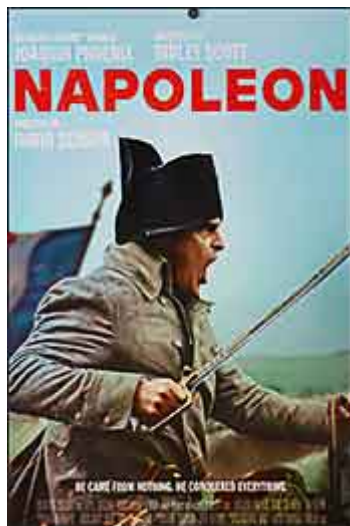
A 1977 Hong Kong rip-off of KING KONG that's as exploitive, excessive and ridiculous as anyone could possibly desire. Created by the ever-opportunistic Shaw Brothers (who it seems never encountered a movie property they couldn't exploit), it's about a giant ape, released from a hole in the ground by an earthquake, embarking on a rampage (the details of which will be familiar to anyone who's ever seen a KING KONG movie). The orchestrator of all this was director Ho Meng-Hua, a Shaw regular who jettisons all notions of taste, logic and continuity. Whenever the action threatens to flag Ho simply has the Peking Man destroy something or inserts a gratuitous close-up of co-star Evelyn Kraft's nether regions, which in this movie turns out to be more than enough.

FILM



4. THE DAY CHRIST DIED

Back in 1929 **Luis Bunuel** is said to have prepared for the premiere of his surreal classic UN CHIEN ANDALOU by filling his pockets with rocks to throw at what he was certain would be a hostile audience, only to find, to his surprise, that people actually liked the film. Flash-forward 72 years to FREDDIE GOT FINGERED, directed by and starring Tom Green, which received all the ire Bunuel had been anticipating. "Good" it may not be, but Green's film is just as surreal in its own way as UN CHIEN ANDALOU. Unrestrained shock value (a surrealist mainstay) is substituted for Bunuel's artistry, with Green swinging a newborn baby around by its umbilical cord, licking an open wound and, in the "happy" ending, creating an outrageously depraved cartoon show. CRITERION CHANNEL



5. **NAPOLEON**

There's never been a fully satisfying movie about Napoleon Bonaparte, and that includes this Ridley Scott epic from last year. Scott attempted to alleviate the major problem afflicting nearly all the other Napoleon films by balancing spectacle with human drama. That drama, alas, isn't very interesting or convincing, with Napoleon (Joaquin Phoenix) portrayed as an unstable fellow in thrall to his wife Josephine (Vanessa Kirby). There are enough panoramic battle scenes to satisfy the spectacle quotient, and spectacular period art direction,

Ideal Easter reading: a Jim Bishop authored book purporting to tell the full story of the "most dramatic day in the history of the world." The narrative begins with the Last Supper, during which Jesus Christ shocks his apostles by revealing that he'll be betrayed, and concludes with his defiled corpse being removed from the cross 24 hours later. The minutiae of the crucifixion is discussed in thorough detail, as are the descriptions of Jesus' suffering, which would doubtless be called exploitive in any other context. Certainly the book contains plenty of non-violent passages, but as in so many other crucifixion themed narratives (**THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST**, anyone?) it's the nastiness that lingers.

BOOK



5. **ROOM**

A long neglected Texas-based indie from 2005 that was partially funded by filmmaker Richard Linklater (of SLACKER, **DAZED AND CONFUSED** and A SCANNER DARKLY fame). About a young woman (Cyndi Williams) in search of a spectral room she envisions in her head, ROOM functions as an eerie and entrancing mood piece, and contains a lead performer who (for once) actually looks like the white trash Texan she plays.

FILM

meaning that despite its humanistic ambitions this NAPOLEON is ultimately just like all the others. APPLE TV+

Also New

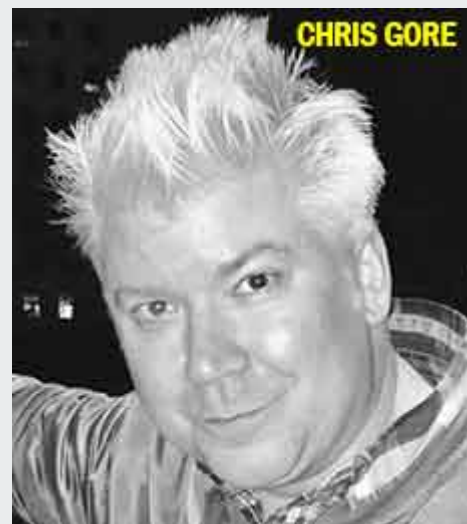
- **FAMINE 33** (Film)
- **HOW LUCKY I WAS** (Autobiography)
- **THIS IS ME NOW** (Film)
- **NAKED TANGO** (Film)
- **NORMAN JEWISON (1926-2024)** (Commentary)
- **WALKERS** (Fiction)
- **WELCOME HOME TO THE FAUSTIAN PENITENTIARY** (Nonfiction)
- **Archived newsletters for easy reference**
- ***And Much More!***



Insider Info

It is, or was, an immutable law of nature that the young are bound to shock their elders. Recently, however, it seems the dynamic has been flipped.

Take the sixtyish Bill Maher, who's softened a great deal in his old age yet causes upset in a way he never did in his 1990s-era POLITICALLY INCORRECT days; every week, it seems, brings some new outrage, with particular ire directed at Maher's (later redacted) promise back in September that his show REAL TIME **would return before the WGA strike ended**. There's also John Stewart, who within a day of his return to THE DAILY SHOW after a nine year absence **was declared a "danger to democracy"** for jokes about the President's age, jokes that by his earlier DAILY SHOW standards seem pretty tame.



The fiftyish **Chris Gore** may not be as well-known as Maher or Stewart, but his career has followed a similar trajectory. Gore was quite a feisty character during his decade-long tenure as founder and editor of the “punk rock-attitude movie magazine” FILM THREAT, whose mission statement was “let’s go start some shit.” For a long time I figured the mag’s 1997 demise marked its editor’s permanent exit from the media spotlight, but Gore (described to me by his colleague David E. Williams as “one of the most hardworking guys I know”) was not to be deterred, popping up throughout the following decades as a TV host, webmaster, documentarian and YouTube content creator.

It’s in the **latter category** that Gore has found his greatest modern-day notoriety, and no wonder: he’s aligned himself with infamous anti-woke YouTubers like Nerdrotic and Doomcock. Also, despite having a far less confrontational demeanor than he did thirty years ago (with the rebranded FILM THREAT now seeking “to champion up and coming indie filmmakers while speaking truth to the entertainment industry”), Gore and co-host Alan Ng have, like Maher and Stewart, riled up their youngers with a **“controversial” take on Hollywood sensitivity readers**, and precipitated a **clash of the titans between Elon Musk and Mark Cuban**. And if his past actions are any indication, I predict that Mr. Gore (who’s currently recovering from a stroke) won’t cease making trouble anytime soon, if ever.

Adam's recommendations organized by
year/month in the **NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE**.



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